

# **EXHIBIT 1**

## **PART 1**

## *Epstein's Island, 'Little St. Jeff's': A Hideaway Where Money Bought Influence*

By Steve Eder

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ST. THOMAS, V.I. — Jeffrey Epstein once described the United States Virgin Islands as “my favorite place to be.”

When he was there, Mr. Epstein had a knack for getting his way, according to public records and interviews with residents and local officials.

Mr. Epstein, the accused sex trafficker who committed suicide in a Manhattan jail this month, used these islands as a personal and corporate hideaway, negotiating lucrative local tax breaks even as he faced federal investigations for sexual misconduct.

He cultivated close ties to the islands' political and financial elite. He employed a governor's wife. He hired an architecture firm owned by that governor's uncle. He donated money, sponsored scholarships and even gave dozens of computers to a local lawmaker to distribute.

The islands became a haven for Mr. Epstein. His private plane would fly him to St. Thomas's international airport, where he would board a helicopter that whisked him to his Little St. James and Great St. James islands. Once there, he was known to entertain famous friends and, his accusers have said in court filings, traffic underage girls for sex.

While federal authorities spent years criminally investigating Mr. Epstein, a spokesman for the local police department said it had no records of having visited his Virgin Islands properties.

“It was kind of accepted,” said Sasha Bouis, who used to run a floating restaurant anchored near Great St. James. “There was just this creepy old billionaire living out there.”



Mr. Epstein's mansion on Little St. James. He paid \$7.95 million for Little St. James in 1998 and spent millions more developing his two islands. Gabriel Lopez Albarran/Associated Press



Since Mr. Epstein was charged with sex trafficking in July, his island operations have been under scrutiny. A few days after his Aug. 10 death, F.B.I. agents and New York Police Department investigators raided Little St. James, which some locals say they had nicknamed “Pedophile Island.”

Federal prosecutors handling Mr. Epstein’s sex-trafficking case have said the investigation will not end with his death. In recent lawsuits, his accusers have lodged fresh claims about how they were sexually assaulted on his islands.

In the weeks ahead, the wrangling over Mr. Epstein’s assets is likely to play out on St. Thomas. Last week, lawyers handling Mr. Epstein’s estate filed his will in court on St. Thomas and said he had more than \$570 million in assets.

Mr. Epstein arrived in the Virgin Islands in 1998, when he paid \$7.95 million for Little St. James, a roughly 70-acre island. Mr. Epstein called it “Little St. Jeff’s.” In 2016, he bought the larger Great St. James for \$17.5 million.

Over the years, he spent millions more developing the islands, including building a villa with a library, a Japanese bathhouse and a movie theater.

His construction projects led to repeated clashes between Mr. Epstein and the Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources, according to paperwork related to his work permits reviewed by The New York Times.

A memo from the agency’s wildlife chief in 2010 noted that Mr. Epstein’s properties had “a long history of egregious and blatant disregard for environmental regulations.” Projects had “introduced several nonnative species to the island.” The arrival of one invasive species, the Cuban tree frog, led to a recommendation that all landscaping and building materials be inspected, the memo said.



Mr. Epstein called Little St. James Island “Little St. Jeff’s.” Gabriella N. Baez for The New York Times

Mr. Epstein’s lawyers resolved some disputes by paying fines, retroactively applying for permits and making donations, sometimes using funds from his charities.

In 2016, Mr. Epstein reached a settlement with the agency over unapproved construction projects on Great St. James. Officials soon accused his company of violating the agreement by not removing a beach bar cabana and by expanding a driveway, despite a stop-work order.